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ABSTRACT

Licensed and unlicensed providers of child care in Virginia were asked about their training needs. Responses revealed that providers have little time for themselves and their families, and therefore, innovative training methods must be planned to deliver programs that will fit into their lifestyles. It was also found that new providers needed an initial understanding of the business aspects of family child care, and knowledge of children's needs, first aid, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. More experienced providers needed updates on topics such as taxes, parent communication, solutions for problems, and networking. When providers initially began caring for children, they relied on their own parenting experiences, experience with babysitting, and work in church and youth programs. A total of 82 percent of these providers indicated that they wanted or needed additional training in child care and development. However, 67 percent indicated that they could not take part in such training, citing "no time to attend" as their primary reason. Although providers received their information about child care from written materials from community agencies and magazines, their first preferences for receiving information were by videotape and short-term workshops. Providers' most urgent needs were for "respect, support, and appreciation" from the community. (AC)

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Training Needs of Family Child Care Providers: Seeking Alternatives

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Running Head: TRAINING NEEDS

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Training Needs of Family Child Care Providers: Seeking Alternatives

Training in child development is a major component of the quality in child care environments. Literature in child care and education recognizes the positive effects of formal teacher training and child-related job experience on teacher-child interactions. To be effective, caregivers should understand the needs and interests of children and provide an environment which enables the child to explore and learn through discovery.

Nearly 80% of children in the United States are in some form of family child care. Typically, family child care providers are self-employed and depending on the regulations of the state, generally are not required particular training or personal qualifications to enter the profession. Ritter and Welch (1988) described family child care providers as an "unknown clientele unreachable through traditional programs and somewhat unmotivated to seek further education." (p. 5) Many caregivers respond negatively to training, responding that since they have been parents and grandparents, training is unnecessary.

Family child care providers work in excess of 8 hours per day; therefore, they make it clear that weekends and evenings are reserved for their own families, household chores, and preparing for the next child care session. Consequently, training programs scheduled during these times are less likely to be attended. Barriers to planning training program also include initial resistance to group meetings, needs for transportation particularly

for rural locations, child care relie,f and the perception that training is a private matter not requiring outside interference (Ritter & Welch, 1988; Kilmer, 1979).

Family child care providers are an adult audience in need of training to raise the quality of child care and to provide those providing care with options and information about child development. Planning educational programs for adults can be a challenge. Many adults needing further education are insecure and self-conscious having a perception that they are too old for classes and that learning will be like their often negative memory of school. From the adult training literature, we do know htat adults want to gain information that is readily applicable, practical, builds their personal esteem, is meaningful and enhances their career or personal success (citations). If providers can experience positive training programs and be able to immediately apply new information, there may be a greater chance they will enroll in subsequent training programs.

Just as early childhood educators plan programs based on the individual needs of children, trainers of adults should consider the personal characteristics of adults, theie experience and educational base and their various developental levels. So, how do we plan for such diversity in one audience; family child care

providers?

In Virginia, the licensed and unlicensed providers statewide were asked about their training needs. Basically what was found was that providers have little time for themselves and their families, so innovative training methods must be planned to deliver programs which will be beneficial and fit into their lifestyles.

What prepares people to become family child care providers?

Providers agreed that persons just entering the family child care field have different training needs from those who had been in a child care professional for some time. They agreed that new providers need an initial understanding of the business aspects of the family child care as well as knowledge of children's needs, first aid, and CPR. More experienced providers need updates on topics such as taxes, parent communication, solutions for problems, and information on networking. All providers continue to request information about discipline and behavior management as a primary topic of continual interest. There appears to be a large gap in the initial training in business management for this audience.

Where do providers gain a basis of information about children? Providers in Virginia indicated that the information they received when they initially began caring for children came from their own parenting experiences, experience babysitting, and work with

children in church programs and youth groups. Eighty-two percent responded they want or need additional training in child care and development. Those who indicated they could not take part in child care training (67%) cited "no time to attend" as the primary reason. This seems to indicate a great need to offer parent training in a more appropriate manner to a broad segment of the population since this serves as atraining ground for persons managing child care environments a sparents or as family child care providers.

How do Providers want to Receive Information?

Presently providers in Virginia get their information about child care and child development from written materials distributed by community agencies, and from magazines. Since providers are utilizing agency pamphlets and newsletters, and in many cases prefer to learn through reading brief articles, the newsletter format and short topical brochures with self-tests could be developed for continuing education and self-study. However, there may be other preferences for attaining information.

Providers first preferences for receiving information is by videotape and short term workshops. There is an overwhelming interest, however, in receiving college credit for any continuing education programs which they attend. In scheduling attendance,

they prefer to attend a formal course or workshop on Saturday mornings or a weekday evenings. Even with the time restraints providers report, thirty-five percent indicated that they could invest as much as one semester per year for training.

Since videos were the first choice for delivery of short term training, and there appears to be a gap in provider information about both discipline and business management in family child care, the production of a video training series could be developed, particularly for the novice provider who needs information on business management and children's needs.

A comparison of the preferred method of learning with the amount of time providers are willing to invest in training reveals that the method of learning changes with the amount of time providers are willing to invest. As reflected in Table 1, videos were the first choice in all cases except for those who would invest a semester in training when credit classes ranked as the top choice.

Table 1

Time Investment Crosstabulated with Preferred Method of Learning for Licensed Family Child Care Providers

Method	2-4 hrs	1-2 days	3-4 days	1 week	1 semester
Video	83%	65%	75%	54%	46%
Credit class	33%	43%	8%	28%	69%
Non-credit	--	43%	8%	29%	39%
Articles	33%	57%	58%	17%	8%
Workshops	33%	43%	66%	71%	49%
Self-study	49%	14%	17%	38%	30%
Audiotapes	33%	14%	16%	--	8%
In-home trng.	17%	--	8%	33%	17%
Bookmobile ser.	--	--	25%	--	17%
Phone tapes	17%	14%	8%	--	--

Does not tally 100% since providers were allowed to select three methods of learning. Methods with less than 8% not reported.

"We want a little respect"

Providers were asked what their most urgent need was at this time. Overwhelmingly the response was "respect, support and appreciation" from the community for the service they are providing to parents and children. Additional urgent needs include insurance availability, a larger pool of providers to help them with referrals, and ways to communicate and "deal" with parents. To build on this "urgent: need for respect, planned public awareness efforts about providers and their professional involvement should occur in communities and with users of their services.

In addition to professional respect, all providers agreed that certificates of accomplishment were a good way to communicate to parents and others that they had participated in professional development programs. Some are interested in accumulating Continuing Education Units (CEUs), but prefer that they be accumulated and transferred eventually to college credits.

From this data, it appears, there is much work for continuing educators, trainers, and support personnel, in order to plan training programs which are not only informative, but meet the scheduling needs and developmental needs of family child care providers. To further advance the thinking of planners,

With this information, early childhood professionals, provider

association representatives, and agency leaders should cooperatively review training delivery models to design a strategy to meet the training needs for this audience of caregivers.

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